

# critical digest

BEST WISHES FOR HAPPY NEW YEAR

505 FIFTH AVENUE. N. . . . N. Y.  
MU 2-0328

T. M. KRAUS

"CD" Printed Format Starts  
in Late Jan 1955.

Dec 29, 1954 VII Vol No 16. The Weekly New York City Theatre Newsletter \$10-\$25 year

## New York Theatre Week

Anastasia-Lyceum 12/29. Elaine Perry presents new play by Marcelle Maurette, adapted by Guy Bolton with Viveca Lindfors, Eugenie Leontovitch, Joseph Anthony...The Troublmakers-President 12/30 1:30 PM Opening. " " Productions present new melodrama by George Bellak with William Smithers, . . . Wheeler, Curt Conway and Ruth White. ...House of Flowers-Alvin 12:30. Saint Subber presents new musical by Truman Capote and Harold Arlen with Pearl Bailey, Diahann Carroll, Juanita Hall and Fred O'Neal. ...The Fourposter 1/5-City Center NYC The. . . Company second production ,revival of Jan de Hartog comedy with Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn.

## Digests of Current Week Theatre Reviews

What Every Woman Knows-City Center 12/22. Helen Hayes return to her favorite role was greeted by unanimous applause from NY daily critics. NYC Theatre Company first production of season was cheered in almost every department. Only Watts,Post, thought Barrie script a bit dated. Atkinson,Times,billed sentimental play as ideally suited to her modesty and gleaming style of comedy. Her showmanship,points out Kerr, Herald Tribune, is something that should be required playgoing for all young actresses who hope to get on in the world. Kent Smith, Viola Roach, Betsy von Furstenburg were also okayed. Chapman,News,was frankly surprised play remains so pertinent. Play is a triumph of Hayes whole career,raves Hawkins,World Telegram & Sun. She was especially lauded for conceiving play in terms of a stature bigger than . . . life,which makes it the masterpiece it deserves to be. Bachelor Watts,Post,notes that point of play aids his ego,for his triumphs are his own. While recently married McClain, Journal American,admits his suggestion that his wife write his review didn't work.

Portrait of A Lady- ANTA Playhouse 12/23/54. Dull is the word most NY daily critics used to describe William Archibald's adaption of Henry James novel. Coleman,Mirror,was sole aisle sitter to think show which starred Jennifer Jones might have had a limited appeal. Characters in on-stage gallery he found bloodless, but momentarily intriguing. Atkinson,Times, stated that mind is the thing most lacking in the script and in most of the performances. A small,dreary island of a show,summed up Kerr,Herald Tribune. Language of play is dead,concluded Chapman,News. A pretty canvas which lacks excitement,thought McClain, Journal American. The costumes by Cecil Beaton and the sets by William and Jean Eckart were praised by most. While supporting cast which included Robert Flemyng,Cathleen Nesbitt,Douglas Watson and Barbara O'Neill were for the most part excused. New decor of the ANTA Theatre was cheered by all. Show closed after four performances, having skipped two matinees.

Black Eyed Susan-Playhouse 24/54.-25/54. Worst panning of any show so far this season received by new A B Shiffren comedy,staged by Gregory Ratoff and featuring Vincent Price and Kay Medford. Foul Ball was headline on Atkinson,Times,piece which pasted playwright as having no recognizable talent as an author. Show,he concluded,is likely to give indecency a bad name. Kerr,Herald Tribune,closed his piece by stating that most of his comments couldn't be printed in his paper. Chapman,News, summed up the evening as shoddy,sleezing,leering,vulgar,blatant,ill mannered,coarse, witless,feckless,insulting,discouraging and unfunny. The others didn't like it either.

\* \* \* \* \*

' Off Broadway '

\* \* \* \* \*

Vernon Rice Memorial Award has been set up by "Drama Desk", the NY Theatre reporters and editors organization. The award will be in the form of a scroll to be given at the final meeting of the group of the season to the actor, playwright, director, etc responsible for significant work in the Off Broadway theatre. The committee who will make the awards includes, Francois Herridge, chairman, John Beaufort, Tom Dash, Rita Hassen, William Hawkins, Jack Keating and Ted Kraus.

Thieves Carnival by Jean Anouilh, produced and staged by Warren Enters will be the next production at Cherry Lane. Way of the World will close Jan 23 and new play will open Feb 1...Merchant of Venice with Clarence Derwent and Whitford Kane will open Jan 7 at Club Theatre, 52 E 78. Regular performance will be given Fri, Sat, Sun nights with Sat, Sun matinees...Paul Vincent Gordon will direct Passion of Gross, Harold Levitt's new play which Arthur Langer and Bernard Lubar will present at Theatre de Lys Jan 9...Theatre Unlimited will open at Open Door in Greenwich Village with 6 originals starting with The Weaker Sex by Marilyn Ellis...Lou Gilbert will return to his role in The Dybbuk.

An Ideal Husband, Oscar Wilde's seldom seen comedy presented at Royal Playhouse, 62 E 4, drew split reviews. Herridge, Post, found it neither Wilde at its best, nor arena production at its best, but critic did feel it deserves more attention than it is getting. On the Friday she attended only 8 of the 100 seats were occupied, yet show offers more entertainment than you will frequently find at a far higher price. Kerner, Women's Wear, marked show down as one of the major delights of the Off Broadway season, given a sophisticated and spirited workout by a good cast and a remarkable director.

\* \* \* \* \*

' Yiddish '

\* \* \* \* \*

King and Cobbler presented by Folk-siene, 128 Stanton, added 2 more fine reviews. Rosenberg, Post, and Wilken, News, lauded rewarding and glowing performance of an unusual comedy.

\* \* \* \* \*

' Futures Dates '

\* \* \* \* \*

Flowering Peach	Belasco	Dec 28
Anastasia	Lyceum	Dec 29
Troublemakers	President	Dec 30
House of Flowers	Alvin	Dec 30
Time of Your Life	C.Center	Jan 5
Merchant Venice	Club	Jan 7
Passion of Gross	De Lys	Jan 9
Doctor's Dilemma	Phoenix	Jan 11
Festival	Longacre	Jan 12
Sailor's Delight	Imperial	Jan 13
Fourposter	C.Center	Jan 19
Plain & Fancy	Imperial	Jan 20
Silk Stockings	Imperial	Jan 21
Moon Misbegotten	Bijou	Jan 25
Grand Prize	Lyceum	Jan 26
Thieves Carnival	Cherry Lane	Feb 1
Dark Is Light E.	ANTA	Feb 9
Desperate Hours	Barrymore	Feb 10

\* \* \* \* \*

' Vaudeville '

\* \* \* \* \*

New Palace show headed by Sibyl Bowan, Michael Chimes, Leonardo & Anita, Stuffy Bryan and De Mattizzia.

\* \* \* \* \*

' West Coast '

\* \* \* \* \*

Fun For Your Lives, Leon Lord's original comedy-drama opened at Geller Theatre with Tony Garr, Pamela Jayson, James Parker, John Criswell...Green Fields, Peretz Hirshbein's folk comedy due at New Playhouse, will include Jean Grosz, Arno Tanney, Janet Brandt, Than Wyenn.

11 45 Revue opened at Ivar Theatre at 11 45 PM, with an extra "matinee" on 8 40 PM Saturdays. Barbara Staples, Dick Meredith and others join producer Ray Bourbon in cast. After L.A. run show will move to Geary, S.F...Teahouse of August Moon, Wonderful Town booked into Biltmore, L.A. early in new year...Judith Evelyn will portray lead in Pasadena Playhouse production of Prescott Proposals due in Jan.

TUNE WRCA BEN GRAUER 7 30 AM day after Broadway opening for quotes of reviews compiled by "C.D."

\*-----\*  
! Green Room Department !  
\*-----\*

PORGY ABROAD... Sensational success of Porgy and Bess in Yugoslavia testifies to the greatness of George Gershwin's achievement as well as to the quality of the performance given by the American negro cast, states Times editorial. This is an artistic success of which we can all be proud. If we wish foreigners to understand the diversity and richness of US culture we must make it possible for them to have contact with our culture. Economics often halts such contacts. Editorial suggests that here obviously is an area where subsidy from Government or foundation sources makes sense.

COLUMN TIPS... King and I backers have split a million \$\$ in profits, reports Winchell... Broadway hears Lunatics & Lovers based on evening author spent in apartment of press agent Eddie Jaffee, hears Walker... Not all buddy-pals between male leads of Fanny, notes Kilgallen... Roz Russell to return to NY in a straight role, says Farrell.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... \$4.20 is too high for a "rehearsal" performance of House of Flowers viewed from second balcony of Erlanger, Philadelphia, complains Variety letter writer... From balcony of 46th St, no one except Nancy Kelly could be heard in Bad Seed, reports a Times letter writer... Answering charges of high prices of theatre tickets, Herman Levin, president of League of NY Theatre, files facts of Prof Saxon, Yale, Theatre survey, in Times Mail Bag. Since 1944 prices of tickets for musicals have gone up 34% and for non-musicals 28F. Theatre wages during the same time have increased from 40% to 175%, while other costs have risen proportionately.

Critical THOUGHTS... Arthur Miller's blunt reason why he believes aspiring actors keep flocking to Broadway even when they know 90% of Actors Equity is unemployed is simply "that there are always certain persons who are born without all their marbles." Miller thesis stated in his article in current Holiday... Heavy-weight actors Francis Sullivan, Walter Slezak and Buddy Hackett, all in current hits, would qualify in weight, if not ferocity, for the left side of the Detroit Lions' line, bets McClain, Journal American.

KINGSLEY RESEARCH... Schopenhauer, Shaw and Freud are the basic research Sidney Kingsley studied in his "research" work for Lunatics and Lovers, he told Drama Desk. He also studied Restoration comedies and those of Moliere and Aristophanes. Author also read theatre editors preface which was cut from play. It was to have ended with "Hotel Essex" sign bursting out to read "Hot Sex."

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... Albert Salmi, The Rainmaker, sort of lounged his way into acting, Sheaffer, Eagle, discovered. After returning from 35 months in the Army in Germany, the young actor enrolled at the Dramatic Workshop and the American Theatre Wing mostly to rest. Though he hasn't seen many Broadway plays he is an avid play reader and carries a well thumbed Shakespeare under his arm.

\*-----\*  
! Pros & Cons by TMK !  
\*-----\*

What Every Woman Knows is a delightful, near perfect revival of the Barrie comedy. Helen Hayes and entire cast are just wonderful. Only complaint can be leveled against the super onstage microphones which pick up every footstep. This cast is in strong enough voice to turn off this sound system entirely.

Portrait of a Lady presented the most handsome costumes and sets of the year. Neither star nor cast is to blame for simple fact that this James piece is deadly dull. ANTA Playhouse though is a sight to behold, inspite of the electric shocks you receive constantly.

"Theatre eviction" is the newest disease to hit the "fabulous invalid." Variety reports that the Shuberts are apparently trying to solve the current Broadway theatre shortage by ousting the moderate gross shows. They are understood to be offering the Music Box and Cort to incoming producers. Tender Trap, which had been playing at the Longacre, announced its closing date as of Jan 8. Interestingly enough the next attraction at the Longacre will be Walter Fried's production of Festival. Fried is current company manager of Tender Trap. Variety understands that a theatre management can reduce attendance at any moderate gross show by having its box-office employees discourage window sales.

#### Plays

Portrait of A Lady, Black Eyed Susan closed...Sailor's Delight to open at Imperial Jan 13...Moon for the Misbegotten to open at Bijou Jan 25...Dark Is Light Enough to open at ANTA Playhouse Feb 9...Desperate Hours to open at Barrymore Feb 10...Three for Tonight due at Plymouth week of March 20...Fanny has been grossing \$65,900 per week, with producers keeping all above \$46,000.

#### People

Pat Breslin, Paul Lukas and Liam Redmond signed for Wayward Saint.. Maurice Chevalier will be presented in NY next fall by Gilbert Miller... Felicia Montealegre has replaced Mai Zetterling in Tonight in Samarkand... George Gino, in Bad Seed cast, is stage name of Off Broadway producer Ted Mann... Willard Swire will retain his post with ANTA... Elliott Nugent injured by car... Paul Bailey returned to cast of House of Flowers... Joe Laurie's theatre library presented to NY Public Library Theatre Collection includes 17 crates of theatre items.

#### Other Broadways

Oklahoma touring company organized by Nick Mayo, Phil Mathias and Jean Barrere will curtail its travels after Jan in Indianapolis after playing 150 towns in 16 weeks... Milwaukee's new professional theatre will be named the Miller Theatre, and is slated to start arena productions Jan 25... Lee Falk will again operate the British Colonial Playhouse, Nassau, Bahamas this winter... Geran TV viewers have seen productions of Caine Mutiny Court Martial, Anna Christie, Camina Real and Our Town this season.

#### Theatre Film Notes

Kismet film version will feature Ann Blyth, Howard Keel and Dolores Grey... Hal Wallis plans to make film version of Sunrise and Smoke in the fall of 1955.

#### Theatre Record Notes

Silk Stockings songs will be recorded on 30 separate discs, plus the RCA Victor original cast album... Capitol will release sound track of Guy and Dolls film.

CRITICAL DIGEST  
505-5th Ave, NYC

First Class Mail

